

APPENDIX

SUCH is the narrative of Silas Fordred, master mariner of Hythe, the cinque port in the county of Kent.

Now on reading this strange story I was greatly perplexed. It seemed difficult to believe that this direct Elizabethan mariner had fabricated the string of events here reproduced, for, by his own showing, he was a plain and simple man, without overmuch imagination or phantasy, and I found it indeed hard, with my extended knowledge of man and woman, to set down this yarn of Silas Fordred's as one huge lie from beginning to end, as a man of shorter sight and less penetration might have set it down. Often I pondered over the strange land of the bronze idol and what had happened

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there, and the only clue I had to the mystery was the inscription in tall ebony letters:

“DIGO RODRICOVEZ,”

which in truth was little help to me. Yet for many months these two words remained in my head, and often have I seen them stand out clear and black before my eyes.

Everything comes to him that waits, so that one day as I was burrowing among some old volumes in the great library of the British Museum, I ran across a large folio bound in brown leather and printed in the Spanish tongue. In that language was inscribed on the title page: *The Life and Adventures of Don Diego Rodriguez*. Again the words “DIGO RODRICOVEZ” came back to me, and eagerly I read page after page of the great volume.

From it I gathered that Don Diego Rodriguez was a man of much cun-

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ning, with great learning and skill in alchemy. Towards the end of the fifteenth century he had become Grand Inquisitor of Spain, and in that capacity had devised machines of so fiendish a nature that his brother inquisitors had held a council at which it was conclusively proved that Don Diego was in league with the Devil, and it was furthermore decided that for the welfare and safety of the State, it were well that the Grand Inquisitor should leave the country and take his hellish inventions elsewhere; for no man, were he Cardinal or the King's own self, was safe, as the Don could kill without leaving wound or sign of poison or other witness. In the same year as that in which the council was held, Don Diego had left Spain in a curious vessel of his own construction, that had neither mast nor sail nor galley-slave. He took with him the whole of his vast wealth, and, such

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was the dread that men had of him, that no one made effort to deprive him of his ill-gotten treasure. His sole companion was a girl child, reputed to be his daughter, and thus he set off across the ocean.

The rest of his life is shrouded in some mystery, and there is no absolute certainty as to his further movements. Rumour hath it that he reached an island, presumably one of the West Indies, where he landed and caused the natives to build him a great castle; also, that as soon as this was accomplished he set to work to depopulate the island by means of the same hellish inventions that were the cause of his banishment.

Such in brief was the story of Don Diego Rodriguez, whom I hold to be identical with Silas Fordred's "DIGO RODRICOVEZ," and, seeing that Silas had but his memory and an imperfect education to trust to, there is little to

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wonder at in the fact that the Hythe seaman should so misspell what he had but read long months before.

What makes me further incline to an implicit belief in this theory is, that among other marvels accredited to the Don was the power of making permanent the reflection of a human face in a mirror, a discovery somewhat akin to our modern art of photography. This will account for the figure behind the red silk curtain, doubtless a reproduction of the Don's own features. The reappearance of this figure when Silas was escaping to his ship with the diamonds was no doubt due to the seaman's evil conscience—merely an hallucination of an excited brain. Most of the other so-called marvels were skilfully constructed machines that any mechanical engineer of the present day could double; that such was the case is amply proved by the failure from rust and unuse of the mechanism that

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worked the giant sword-blade that Silas encountered in the great hall. Further, I have little doubt but that the "Hag of the Turret" was the identical girl-child, grown old, that accompanied Don Diego when he left Spain; naturally, Silas Fordred saw in this bearded old woman a "witch" and a "sorceress," and most men of his day, even those of birth and education, would have arrived at a similar conclusion, especially after the episodes that preceded the encounter. The hairy man, Esau, was in all probability an aboriginal native, one, or the child of one, that had escaped the Don's clutches.

I have only to add that, in my humble opinion, it must have been Don Diego Rodriguez, and not Christopher Columbus, that really discovered America.

